



DELTA STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

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To: Delta Stewardship Council Members

From: Joe Grindstaff, Executive Officer

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Subject: Delta Plan – First Staff Draft

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Today we will release the Agenda package for next week's meeting --- containing the first staff draft of the Delta Plan. I expect that our final Delta Plan will look drastically different from this version, but this first draft is intended to provide you with a discussion document and to assist you as you consider the direction and policy goals of the Delta Plan.

I want to point out four key preliminary staff draft findings in this document:

1. **“California’s total water supply is oversubscribed. California regularly uses more water annually than is provided by nature.”** This reality makes the management of our limited surface water supplies and the Delta even more critical. When water exports from the Delta are reduced, the unintended consequence is increased demand on an already overused and unsustainable groundwater system.
2. **“California’s water supply is increasingly volatile.”** Precipitation and runoff patterns are changing, increasing uncertainty for water supply and quality, flood management, and ecosystem functions.” We must adapt our management practices in order to protect ourselves against present and future risk and if we are to achieve the coequal goals.
3. **“Even with substantial ecosystem restoration efforts, some native species may not survive.”** Best available science indicates that some stressors are beyond our control and the system may have already changed so much that some species may never be able to recover.
4. **“There is no comprehensive state or regional emergency response plan for the Delta.”** In spite of all the analysis that says that we have greater risk than New Orleans, all we have at the state and regional level are plans to develop plans.

On the positive side, I do believe the Delta Plan finally offers California an opportunity to address some of the Delta’s most vexing problems, specifically, achieving the co-equal goals.

Coequal goals means the two goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. The coequal goals shall be achieved in a manner that protects and enhances the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place.

There are some things to keep in mind as you review the draft:

The Executive Summary, Chapters 4 (Science and Adaptive Management), 7 (Water Quality), 10 (Governance), 11 (the Finance Plan) and 12 (Integration of Delta Plan Strategies) will be added later. Some of these chapters will evolve around the decisions made in the main policy chapters.

At the heart of this first draft are the core policy chapters: Manage Water Resources, Restore Delta Ecosystem, Reduce Delta Flood Risk, Protect and Enhance...the California Delta as Evolving Place.

For this version I ask you look past the wordsmithing and readability issues that will be worked out by staff over time. Instead, draw your attention to the organizing principles of the draft, and give staff direction on how to approach the findings and strategies.

The core chapters (chapters 5 – 9) are organized as follows: introduction, co-equal goals, inherent objectives (drawn from Water Code Section 85020), other objectives (drawn from the Delta Reform Act as well as other state law), findings, and finally, a list of potential policy areas for additional focus. In this draft, the findings range from direct quotations from state law to conclusions or excerpts from state or local agency publications.

I welcome your input about how staff should organize and standardize the findings sections and in determining appropriate linkages between the findings, statutory objectives and eventually, the policies. This will naturally lead to a discussion about how to craft policies that will ultimately achieve the objectives of the Delta Plan.

Once the Council weighs in on the structure of the Delta Plan, staff can format the document and improve its readability and logical flow. After this is accomplished the Council can focus exclusively on the policy-based discussions, which will be the heart of the Delta Plan.

At our February 24-25 meeting we have reserved six hours to devote to discussion of the staff draft. At the following meeting (workshop) on March 10-11 we expect to have more in depth discussion of each of the core policy chapters, with panels and detailed analysis. The second version of draft Delta Plan will be released on March 18. We will then make sure staff has satisfactorily reflected your direction and proceed with the Delta Plan development process, one draft each month with up to four days of discussion. The fourth version in May is anticipated to become the basis for our Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

After circulating the draft EIR we will bring back all the public comments and once again a new draft of the plan. After three additional months, we expect the seventh draft in November to be the final staff draft, with the Council at that meeting adopting the Delta Plan. The plan is then forwarded to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) which reviews the plan and issues it as a regulation.